

The Kook Vote

By William F. Buckley, Jr.



IN New York City, National Review magazine waggishly proposes formation of a new committee: an Impeach Earl Warren Committee, with a board of directors composed of Mark Lane, Hugh Trevor-Roper, Norman Mailer, Dwight Macdonald, Richard Goodwin, and Bertrand Russell. It is, after all, the implicit contention of these and other gentlemen that Earl Warren, in giving his hallowed name to his Commission's Report, lied for his country or for some other agent.

And again in New York, the Negro poet and playwright LeRoi Jones gives a recital of his work, which is one part of hymn to himself and members of his race ("We are the beautiful people with African imaginations"), one part hatred for the white man (Jones cited, according to one reporter, "the impossibility of any sort of rapprochement between the races"), a little anti-Christianity (he calls Jesus "the dead Jew"); and an overlay of anti-Semitism (among the crimes of the Jews: they stole their arithmetic from the Arabs).

In California a major kook-gathering is nourished by members of the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, Robert Hutchins' Zoo in Santa Barbara where men of all faiths congregate to nourish their neurotic dislike for their country. Thither has the Most Rev. Bishop James A. Pike repaired, but he left the monastery to address the meeting of the kooks in Los Angeles, where they gathered as a "Statewide Conference on Power and Politics" and passed resolutions to the effect, roughly speaking, that the United States ought to be abolished. Bishop Pike thought they went a little far — he especially balked at the New Leftists' denunciation of Gov. Pat Brown.

As a practical man, Bishop Pike desires Gov. Brown's re-election if only to save California from the extremism of Ronald Reagan. But on this point Bishop Pike found himself in disagreement with one of his colleagues at the Center, Harvey Wheeler. Wheeler is the

co-author of "Fail Safe," the novel designed to scare everybody half to death. Mr. Wheeler thought the Conference was terrific. "An expression of mature American radicalism in the Jeffersonian tradition" which, he predicted, would take on national proportions.

The Conference committee approved resolutions to "support the idea of black power," abolish NATO, oppose the draft, encourage anti-Viet Nam demonstrations, etc., etc. What emerged, said one of the editors of Ramparts Magazine, a mouthpiece for the New Left, "could be the basis for a new third party."

Meanwhile, politicians on both coasts drone on about extreme-right-wingism. Senator Javits several times lately warned the Republican Party against its right wing, by which he means anyone who supported Senator Goldwater, which is to say the great majority of Republicans in Senator Javits' state. And poor Gov. Brown is still puffing around California trying to describe his opponent as a hideous apparition from the ideological world who, if elected, will impeach Earl Warren, eat the United Nations, bomb Paris and close down the University of California. Well, not quite. "Governor Brown," Time magazine comments in the current issue, "has left nothing to the imagination in smearing Reagan with the stain of extremism."

It is strange how much the left can do and yet avoid embarrassing the Democratic Party. Two years ago the whole country rioted with a fabricated resentment over Senator Goldwater's refusal to bracket the John Birch Society with the Ku Klux Klan. Where are the complementary gestures from the Democrats? Let us hear Franklin Delano Roosevelt Jr. or Frank O'Connor on the subject of LeRoi Jones — or Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Or hear Gov. Brown on the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, or on his former Democratic associate Simon Casaday; on the peacemarchers and anarchists; on the attack on Earl Warren from the other quarter.

But isn't it the problem that without the kook-vote no politician can win; and isn't it the technique in current politics to make that plain concerning Republicans, but never concerning Democrats?